

Integrating ICT into language teaching

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Aims

This module aims to expand upon the ideas and information contained in the Level 1 modules of ICT4LT, especially [Module 1.1](#) and [Module 1.4](#), and examines different ways in which ICT can be integrated into teaching modern foreign languages.

This Web page is designed to be read from the printed page. Use **File / Print** in your browser to produce a printed copy. After you have digested the contents of the printed copy, come back to the onscreen version to follow up the hyperlinks.

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Foreword by Graham Davies

This module is essentially concerned with the **methodology** of integrating ICT into teaching modern foreign languages. The term *methodology* is widely misunderstood and often confused with or used as an alternative to **pedagogy**. In some contexts the two terms may be interchangeable, but it is useful to make a distinction. Pedagogy is more concerned with the theory of teaching and learning, whereas methodology describes how something is or should

be done or, in Sue Hewer's words, "the way in which the teacher structures the learning environment" (see [Section 3.3](#)). Many teachers and researchers talk simply about **methods** or **approaches**.

Reference to a concrete example may make the meaning clearer. Let us take a dedicated piece of software that has been designed to teach vocabulary. Part of the program may include an activity in which the learner listens to a stimulus and has to click on a word or picture to indicate what he/she has heard. The underlying **pedagogy** is that this is a good way of teaching, learning, reinforcing or testing vocabulary. This may or may not be true. It may work for some people and not for others, but the designer of the program obviously thought it was a good idea. **Methodology** is more concerned with how the teacher *uses* such software as an aid to teaching and in which kind of learning environment, e.g. on a network of stand-alone computers in the classroom where the learners work mainly on their own, on an interactive whiteboard for whole-class teaching, or as part of a series of integrated activities.

One of the main problems faced by the language teacher, especially newcomers to the profession, is that methodology refuses to stand still. As [McCarthy \(1999\)](#) puts it:

The methodology of foreign language teaching has evolved dramatically over the past half century, with emphasis at different times being placed on a remarkable array of philosophies and approaches under banners such as grammar-translation, audio-lingual, structuro-global audiovisual, inductive/deductive, functional, notional, situational, communicative, immersion, learning/acquisition, suggestopedia, directivist/constructivist, etc. Although each approach has seen its share of zealous purists, it would seem that, viewed from a distance, the abiding lesson to teachers has been that no one approach is a magic wand capable of transforming any class of foreign language learners into near-native speakers of the target language, and that each approach brings to the fore a previously neglected or forgotten facet.

See also Wilfried Decoo's interesting article, *On the mortality of language teaching methods*, which takes a look at the history of language teaching methods, describing the main characteristics of each method and how long it was in favour before being replaced by another approach. He also traces the influence of technology on the evolution of new methods, beginning with the phonograph (the gramophone) in the early 20th century, followed by radio, the tape recorder, television, the computer and, most recently, the Internet. Decoo estimates that the lifespan of a method is around 20-30 years, corresponding to the professional lifespan of its advocates:

If one looks at the more recent past, for main trends 20 to 30 years seem an average. Direct methods roughly from 1880 to 1910, eclectic methods from 1910 to 1940, audio-lingualism from 1940 to 1970, with a short cognitive-code reaction in the decade around 1970, communicative methods from the early seventies to the mid-nineties, post-communicative methods since then. Such a period of twenty to thirty years corresponds logically with the professional lifespan of the advocates. Young fundamentalists, in their thirties, may tie their careers to a new trend and keep it alive until their retirement. Meanwhile a new group of young advocates will try to make their original mark by criticizing their predecessors, while the overall rhythm is controlled by commercial interests: publishers and related organizations will only support a new trend if it suits the cash register. ([Decoo 2001](#))

ICT has added a new dimension to language teaching methodology, but where does the newcomer to ICT begin? The language teacher has to consider carefully the exciting array of

possibilities and opportunities offered by ICT: see [Section 4.2, Module 1.1](#), headed *Twenty different ways of using ICT in the modern foreign languages classroom*.

Keeping pace with new developments is a challenge. ICT, like language teaching methodology, refuses to stand still, moving at a breathtaking pace day by day, and new approaches to using ICT in language teaching and learning are continually appearing. Blogs written by language teachers are important sources of information about new ideas: see [Section 12.2.2, Module 1.5](#), headed *Useful blogs created by and for language teachers*. But there are also many lessons to be learned from the past: see Graham Davies's article, *Lessons from the past, lessons for the future: 20 years of CALL* ([Davies 1997](#)). One of the most important lessons to be learned is that technology on its own is not the panacea; it's how you use technology that counts.

Now read on...

1. Introduction

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1.1 What do we mean by integration?

1.1.1 An overview

Integration of ICT into existing practice is more challenging than, for example, the integration of a new coursebook into an existing scheme of work. In the case of the coursebook, there are far fewer variables to deal with. The print medium is well-known and understood, even if the content and approaches in a new coursebook are different from those embedded in the previous book used. The purpose of this module is to offer insights into aspects of language teaching and learning that you need to take into account when planning to integrate ICT into classroom practice.

In order to get an overview of all the issues before getting down to the nitty gritty of integration, have a look at the article by Brian McCarthy of the University of Wollongong, Australia: *Integration: the sine qua non of CALL*. Thanks to Brian for giving us permission to locate his article at the ICT4LT site. Click here: [McCarthy \(1999\)](#).

1.1.2 Learning task

As you read the article by Brian McCarthy, reflect on how each of the issues is presented in the institution where you teach. To what extent do you think that it will be possible to integrate ICT into your current practice in ways that will raise the standards of language learning of your students?

1.1.3 Historical and social perspective

For many years some teachers were wary of ICT and believed that it would never become a mainstream activity. One of the reasons for this was the fact that, because of lack of adequate access to hardware, it was used as a bolt-on, either to motivate the reluctant learner or to reward the fast learner. It was not a core activity, and, given the shortage of contact time with language classes and the emphasis on the spoken language, teachers often felt that any time available for in-service training would be better spent updating themselves on more mainstream aspects of their work, rather than gaining insights into something which they considered to be a rather expensive optional extra. Even when hardware became more accessible to teachers of foreign languages and their classes, there was a continued reluctance to embrace the medium, and where ICT was used it was not always used to good effect because it remained outside the core teaching and learning processes. Above all it must be borne in mind that no resource is intrinsically perfect. The determining factor for the successful use of any resource in the classroom is **the way it is used**, in particular **the way in which it is integrated** into the teaching and learning process.

Few teachers can now be in doubt about the role of the new technologies in education. The permeation of ICT into all aspects of our lives has raised its profile in education. Not only are ICT skills deemed as essential as traditional literacy and numeracy, but ICT is also seen as having a central contribution to make to improving the quality of learning. For example, the British Government has made it clear that it sees ICT as central to the raising of standards of achievement in education for all students through improved use of existing software, the development of new software, and the use of the Internet for accessing and sharing resources, delivering in-service training and for communication between schools. The important aspect of the British Government's initiative in respect of this module is the fact that training is by subject and that the central theme of the training is integration. There is now an inescapable requirement for every subject teacher in the UK to understand what ICT can do to raise the achievement of all students in their subject area and how to implement appropriate applications in their classroom, within the context of their scheme of work. Here's the message from the horse's mouth under the heading **ICT in Subject Teaching** at the National Curriculum site:

As a general requirement, teachers should provide pupils with opportunities to apply and develop their ICT capability in all subjects (except physical education and the non-core foundation subjects at key stage 1). For each subject, these translate into specific, statutory requirements to use ICT in subject teaching. Teachers should use their judgement to decide when the use of ICT is appropriate at key stage 1 in the non-core foundation subjects. Source: <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk>

As language teachers, we have a tradition of integrating new media into our teaching. We have embraced any new technology which was likely to improve learning. Mindful of the need to bring native speaker voices into the classroom, teachers in the first half of the 20th century took gramophones into their classrooms. These were replaced by reel-to-reel tape recorders when the price was right and appropriate recordings became available. Brave souls

acquired microphones and encouraged students to record their own voices, to accustom them to hearing themselves speaking in another language. The next innovation was the language laboratory, coming as it did at a time when the audio-lingual method was to the fore and drills were considered central to successful language learning. Those entrusted with the maintenance of language laboratories heaved a sigh of relief when audiocassette recorders replaced reel-to-reel tape. Slide and film strip projectors, film projectors and television sets also found their way into language classrooms, followed by video players and video cameras. All of these innovations made their entrance as "bolt-ons". It was only when their characteristics were fully understood and their strengths identified in comparison with existing media that they become integrated into the delivery strategy of the teachers concerned, and into published courses. See [Davies \(1997\)](#).

1.1.4 Integrated resources

Resources that are available on more traditional media, such as audio- and videocassettes (and which are still in use in many educational institutions) are usually fully integrated into courses. For any teaching point, the appropriate section of the teacher's guide will indicate when and in which sequence they should be used. Their content will have been designed to further specific objectives within the course. Their use at particular points in the course to deliver the specific objectives will have been decided upon on the basis of fitness for purpose. Their characteristics, in turn, will have determined the purposes for which they are fitted. For example, the decision to use an audio clip to introduce new items of vocabulary will have been made to ensure that students hear correct pronunciation of the new words, to enable them to hear a voice other than their teacher's so that they learn to deal with a range of voices, male/female, young/old. However, it is unlikely that isolated use of the audio clip will be recommended. The contents are likely to be associated with, perhaps, a set of flashcards, pictures in the coursebook, and text. It is also likely that the teacher's guide will encourage the discrete and mixed use of the various media for specific purposes. For example, teachers might be encouraged to begin by allowing the students to establish meaning by hearing the recorded words and looking at the flashcards. The next stage might be to focus on pronunciation by repetition, with consolidation of the meaning of the words and recall of the spoken words by the continued use of the flashcards. The third stage might take the class to the coursebook where miniature versions of the flashcards are displayed along with the new words. At this stage they will learn to both associate the spelling with the spoken form of the word, and to recognise the written word itself and to link it to the object.

1.1.5 Learning task

Using a course with which you are familiar, take a single and, with reference to all relevant resources (student's book, teacher's guide, flashcards, audiocassette, videocassette, etc) work out what the purpose of each medium is in relation to the stated learning objectives. Consider how the omission of one or other resource would affect the learning process. Does the teacher's guide make it clear how individual resources should be used - either independently or alongside other resources?

Decisions relating to the use of ICT-based resources should be reached in the same way as resources carried by more traditional media. Their characteristics should be identified as a basis for determining for what purpose they should be used and when they would best fit into the overall delivery framework. There is a description of the general characteristics of digital media in [Section 5, Module 1.1](#), headed *General characteristics of digital media*, and in the

subsequent sections of the same module. Have another look at [Module 1.1](#) to refresh your memory.

1.2 What do we mean by Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)?

The term **Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)** is used extensively in the modules in this website. Before examining further the integration of ICT into language teaching, it is important to remind ourselves of the meaning of this term. To some people CALL implies only **dedicated, interactive software** designed specifically to promote language learning, while others see CALL as an all-embracing term:

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) may be defined as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning". [Levy \(1997:1\)](#)

Professional associations such as [EUROCALL](#), [CALICO](#), [IALLT](#) and [WorldCALL](#), subscribe to Levy's definition. Papers presented at their conferences and articles in their publications embrace all aspects of the use of ICT in language teaching and learning. Have a look at [Section 1, Module 1.1](#), headed *Definitions of terms*, and also [Module 1.4](#), *Introduction to CALL*.

Remember that dedicated, interactive CALL software will be based on the author's perception of how students learn languages - the underlying **pedagogy** - and that perception may be implicit or made explicit in the documentation. **Generic software** (e.g. word-processors, *PowerPoint*) has no underlying perceptions about language learning, nor, indeed, any inherent **methodology** for its use.

There is also another important category of software much used by language teachers, namely **authoring programs** designed specifically to promote language learning: see [Module 2.5](#), *Introduction to CALL authoring programs*. These programs offer a range of interactive exercises that are based on perceptions of how students learn languages, but the **content** is determined by the teacher. Such programs can be exploited to support a wide range of methodologies and to accommodate different teaching and learning modes.

2. Three levels of integration

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2.1 Integration at institutional level

As you can see from [McCarthy \(1999\)](#), integration has to take place in a number of different ways, and at different levels of an organisation if it is to be successful in itself and, therefore, lead to successful learning. Most educational institutions have a policy regarding the use of ICT to which all departments have contributed, which determines what hardware should be

purchased, where it should be located and who should have access to it, when and how frequently. The policy should also address issues related to technical support and network management, without which successful integration cannot take place.

2.2 Integration at departmental level

Once the institutional ICT policy has been established, departments then need to formulate their own ICT policy and embed it into the scheme of work for each year group and/or teaching group. For the classroom teacher this is the most important level, which should produce a balanced use of available ICT resources across teaching groups and, by extension, staff and students. ICT resources should be specified for use by year groups or individual classes, just as other resources are. It is equally important that departments recognise when the use of ICT is inappropriate and resist pressure from ICT staff to give students the opportunity to use their ICT skills unless such use will improve their language learning. For example, it cannot be sensible to allow students to spend an hour creating a poster using a graphics package if 50 minutes of the hour are spent on layout and the location and importing of clipart, with 10 minutes dedicated to generating the text.

Once decisions have been taken about which software to use when, in many cases it will be up to individual teachers to decide how to use it, as is the case with more traditional resources. Integration at lesson level is discussed in detail in [Section 3](#) below.

All the above implies that one or more members of the department are aware of all the dedicated ICT resources available to the department and the generic resources available in the school as a whole, and that one or more of them have fully evaluated the software that is being proposed for integration with existing resources.

2.3 Integration and the individual teacher

If you have a departmental colleague who is experienced in the use of ICT and who has specified clearly what should be used when in the scheme of work, your job will be fairly straightforward. You will need to familiarise yourself with the software in advance of using it in class in order to ensure that you understand the potential contribution that it can make to raising the level of achievement of your students in the manner intended, and that you know how to integrate it into the work of the class to achieve maximum benefit. For example, you need to ensure that:

- i. your students are adequately prepared linguistically and technically to use the package;
- ii. you have produced any necessary files and/or documentation;
- iii. you have made any arrangements necessary to gain access to the hardware that you require at a time which enables you to use the ICT at the correct point in your teaching sequence;
- iv. you follow up its use by recycling the language learned in new contexts in subsequent lessons, using whatever resources are appropriate.

3. The "what, when and how" of integration

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3.1 Integration: factors to take into account

If there is no one experienced in the use of ICT in your department, the head of department might decide to share the load and to invite members of the department to suggest when and how ICT applications might be integrated in one or more year groups. It might fall to you, therefore, to consider which software is appropriate to meet departmental needs and how it might best be deployed. You will find that there are a number of factors to take into account if true integration is to be achieved over time, including the theoretical, methodological, organisational and financial.

Taking decisions for a department is not an easy task because teachers have their own beliefs or theories about how people learn languages and their own favourite teaching methods. For the purposes of this module, the pedagogy of language teaching and learning is taken to mean the theories of foreign language acquisition subscribed to by an individual teacher or the author of teaching materials and the methods used to deliver the syllabus in line with the theories subscribed to. A scheme of work is likely to list the anticipated learning outcomes for units of work, the content and the kind of resources available. It is unlikely to be prescriptive about the precise methodology that should be used. At a more practical level, account has to be taken of:

- i. the current level of access to existing hardware in terms of networked labs and computers with access to the Internet,
- ii. the kind of hardware that it would be desirable to have to meet statutory requirements and to enable young people to reach their full potential in terms of language learning,
- iii. the software currently in use in your department,
- iv. the generic software available in your educational institution,
- v. the kind of software that it would be beneficial to have and how to budget to buy it.

See [Davies G., Bangs P., Frisby R. & Walton E. \(2010 revised edition\)](#) *Setting up effective digital language laboratories and multimedia ICT suites for Modern Foreign Languages*, London: CILT.

3.2 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and learning theories

3.2.1 Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

It is not the purpose of this module to discuss the various theories of **Second Language Acquisition (SLA)** that have been developed over the years, e.g. [Krashen \(1981\)](#), [Krashen \(1982\)](#), [Ellis \(1994\)](#). SLA theory might be something that you have memories of reading about during your initial teacher training but which, by now, have distilled into a set of personal beliefs about how people learn languages. It is important that you should be aware of your own beliefs about how people best learn languages, since this will underpin your judgement of the value of dedicated CALL packages, the activities contained in authoring packages and the potential of generic software and Internet resources to promote language learning.

You should, however, bear in mind that research into SLA and the use of computers in language learning and teaching has been taking place for many years: e.g. [Nagata \(1996\)](#), [Chapelle \(1997\)](#), [Chapelle \(1998\)](#), [Schulze \(1998\)](#). SLA is a main focus of professional associations such as [CALICO](#), [EUROCALL](#) and [IALLT](#), which have collaborated in order to establish a firmer base for [CALL Research](#). The journals of these associations regularly publish articles on SLA. See also the online [Language Learning & Technology](#) journal.

3.2.2 Learning theories

Theories which seek to explain how people learn languages very often reflect contemporary findings of psychologists interested in learning theory in general. The last century produced a host of psychology-related theories of which the following were but two. When **programmed learning** was fashionable, language teaching followed the model and learners were exposed to carefully graded materials, related drills and little by way of authentic input. Learners were seen as empty vessels into which teachers poured knowledge. Little was known about how learners stored that knowledge in either the short or long term, nor what the mechanisms were for retrieval. No account was taken of what the learner brought to the learning process in terms of prior knowledge and learning strategies. Later in the last century, **cognitive psychology** gained ground and provided insights into how knowledge is stored and retrieved by the brain. It was also acknowledged that the learner was far from an empty vessel, but that individual learners brought with them their own set of previous knowledge and experience and that the active participation of the learner and engagement with the new knowledge were important. Cognitive psychologists believe that we have in our heads **schemata** or frameworks within which we store existing knowledge, relate new knowledge with existing knowledge, and develop links between related sets of knowledge that enable us to retrieve items appropriately, when required. In the wake of these findings, language teaching moved towards an information processing view of language learning in which students engaged actively with the language within meaningful settings, processing and re-processing new linguistic items by themselves and then in conjunction with previously learned items, in familiar and new contexts. In published courses the content of individual units was determined by the topic to be covered. The new vocabulary was topic-related, as were the linguistic functions to be taught. Grammar points, if referred to at all, were related to the

functions. Grammar progression was discredited. However, with the increasing value placed by society on knowledge, greater emphasis is now being placed on the formal knowledge of language and grammar is once more on the agenda for teacher, students and course writers, although based on current usage within context.

In practical terms, most teachers do not stick rigidly to a specific theory of language learning. However, they tend to have views on the kinds of processes or activities that they believe lead to learning and those that positively hinder learning. For the purposes of this module, then, we place the emphasis on **processes** rather than **theories**. In this context it is interesting to note that many teachers who, in the early 1980s, were caught up with the communicative movement in a big way, rejected the kind of software which offered electronic versions of traditional activities such as gap-filling, sequencing and matching because they believed that student activity had to involve authentic language use in some form or another. However, this kind of software has proved to be the most lasting and still tops the best-seller lists of several software publishers and their agents. This seems to suggest that teachers have purchased and used the software despite their views on what does and doesn't work in language teaching, and that they have found that learning has taken place through processes which, from a theoretical standpoint, they would have rejected. With the returned focus on knowledge of language, it is likely that such software will enjoy further popularity. The key to the success of this kind of software, as opposed to paper versions of the same activities, is that the software provides **instant feedback**. This changes radically the learning experience for the student. It is important to look very closely at exactly what is happening in computer software before either dismissing it out of hand or taking it on board in a big way. You might just be surprised at the kind of cognitive processes are going on inside students' heads!

3.2.2 Learning task

The purpose of this task is to encourage you to reflect on your own practice and your beliefs about what does and doesn't work in terms of language teaching and learning. This is a difficult thing to do. Teaching is very intuitive. However, one of the best ways to extend and enhance your practice is to reflect on what you do, why and how you do it - and to evaluate the outcomes in terms of student progress.

What are your own beliefs about what works and what doesn't in language teaching and learning?

- i. In Column 1 of Table 1 below, make a list of at least three processes engaged in by learners that you believe promote successful language learning.
- ii. In Column 2 list the kind of learning that you think each process is likely to promote.
- iii. Express both the processes and the nature of the learning in concrete terms. For example, you might feel that intensive listening is important to consolidate aural recognition of newly learned vocabulary.
- iv. In Column 1 of Table 2, make a list of at least three processes that you believe have no value and give your reasons in Column 2. For example, you might feel that gap-filling is of little value since it tends to work at word level whereas you believe that students should work at sentence level.

Table 1

Language Learning/Teaching Processes	Language Learning Outcomes
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Table 2

Processes of no value	Reasons for rejection

3.3 Methodology

As you will know from your own experience, teachers do not stick rigidly to a single theory of language learning, nor do they employ a single methodology to put into practice the various theories to which they subscribe. In this module we are using the term methodology to mean *the way in which the teacher structures the learning environment, the resources that s/he provides and the ways in which delivery takes place*.

3.3.1 A fictitious case study

Two teachers in neighbouring classrooms, teaching parallel classes, are at the same point in the departmental scheme of work. They are about to introduce their respective classes to the formation of the simple future tense in French.

In Classroom 1 the teacher explains the formation of the tense with the whole class before presenting them with a paper-based exercise in which they create the correct form of the verb within sentences where the infinitive of the verb is given in brackets. She invites students to correct their work before asking them to identify the characteristics of the tense, in particular the sound of the tense. When she has received an answer which makes reference to the prevalence of the 'r' sound, she asks the class to look at the verbs printed below the gap-fill exercise that they have just done, and to tick off the verbs as they hear them in an audio clip which contains each of the persons of the verb in the future tense. Students are asked to follow up the work in class by copying the verbs into a gapped transcript of the audio clip for their homework. She hands out the gapped text to be used in conjunction with the worksheet already handed out.

In Classroom 2 the teacher talks in English about the notion of tense, past, present and future, including adverbial tense markers. She then plays the same audio clip as her colleague, asking the students first of all to identify the main tense used in the clip by taking account of the tense markers. When everyone is clear about the tense, she asks them to listen again, and to guess which is the letter which predominates in the spelling of the tense, whatever the verb. After they have listened a second time and nominated "r" as the predominating letter, they are given a transcript of the audio clip and asked to underline all of the future tense verbs. Using a

word-processed version of the text, and with the help of an interactive whiteboard, the teacher then asks for volunteers to come up to highlight the future tense verbs. When all the verbs have been identified and the students have checked their printouts, the teacher makes certain that they understand the full text, and draws their attention to the irregular stem of *être*. The students are then asked to work in pairs to draw up the paradigm of the future tense of *être* by reference to the text, within a given time span. At the end of the allotted time, the teacher puts up a correct version of the paradigm. Their homework is to write up where a character from their textbook expects to be at certain points in his life and what he expects to be doing, according to the pictures and vocabulary available to them. The plans are made at ten-year intervals.

3.3.2 Learning task

- i. What are the differences in the starting point of these two teachers with regard to their beliefs about how young people learn languages?
- ii. Which group of students do you think will retain their knowledge of the form of the future tense following the lesson?
- iii. Imagine that you teach a third parallel group of students and your lesson has been timetabled to take place in the departmental computer lab which has enough machines for pair work and which also has a data projector linked to the teacher's computer. How would you tackle the future tense? Would your class score better than the other two in a common assessment assignment involving all four language skills?

3.4 Modes of teaching and learning

As you will have seen from the fictitious case study of the parallel classes given in [Section 3.3.1](#) (above), one aspect of methodology is the mode of teaching and learning adopted, i.e. the extent to which the teacher directs the learning and the extent to which students take responsibility for their own learning. A whole range of modes of teaching and learning are possible, ranging from a tightly teacher-controlled approach to 100% learner autonomy.

As far as ICT is concerned, a free exploratory approach on the part of the learner may be encouraged by the teacher, or a more controlled approach may be preferred, as manifested in a so-called **Integrated Learning System (ILS)** in which the content is presented in tutorial format, followed by graded assessment exercises. Such systems keep scores, providing feedback both to the student and to the teacher, and they are more likely to be based on fairly traditional theories of language teaching and learning. Certain types of **Virtual Learning Systems (VLEs)** also offer a high degree of control: see [Section 8, Module 1.5](#), headed *Distance learning and the Web: VLEs, MLEs etc.* The more controlled approach, however, began to go out of fashion some years ago. As [Davies \(1997:38\)](#) points out, citing [Laurillard \(1993\)](#):

The modern approach stresses the importance of **guidance** rather than **control**, offering the student a default route through the program as an alternative to browsing, and building in intrinsic rather than extrinsic feedback, so that the learner has a chance to identify his/her own mistakes.

See [Section 8, Module 2.5](#), headed *How to factor feedback into your authoring*, on the distinction between **intrinsic feedback** and **extrinsic feedback**.

The term **default route** is used by [Laurillard \(1993:2\)](#): "the route through the material that the author believes to be optimal". Software embodying this freer kind of approach is likely to offer a number of different kinds of activities ranging from the communicative to drill-and-practice and grammar look-up. Students might be offered a suggested route, but nevertheless be free to pursue their own: e.g. as in the *Encounters* series of CD-ROMs, produced by the TELL Consortium. If you tend to offer students choices some of them might find didactic software difficult to cope with. On the other hand, if you tend to structure your students' learning closely then they might find it difficult to make choices. As [Davies \(1997:43\)](#) points out, citing [Laurillard \(1993\)](#):

A default route is the route through the material that the author believes to be optimal. Completely open-ended program structure can make students anxious - they like to know what they are supposed to do. It must always be possible to deviate from the default route, but it should be clear what it is, so that they can just follow it through. This saves students having to make decisions at every turn, and may also encourage them to consolidate, rather than keep moving on.

Above all, when introducing new software, make sure that students understand the demands that it will make on them, and provide them with strategies which will enable them to make the most of what is on offer, whatever the teaching style embedded in it.

As well as using software which embeds specific teaching modes and styles, dedicated CALL software and generic software can be used to support a range of different teaching styles such as whole-class teaching, task-based learning in small groups or individually, and independent learning.

3.4.1 Whole-class teaching

A teacher who favours whole-class teaching will find this style of teaching greatly enhanced by the use of an **interactive whiteboard** or a standard data projector and wall screen. This enables the teacher, for example, to share with her students a *PowerPoint* presentation of new vocabulary or points of grammar or to encourage them to work together on the development of a text by word-processing individual input and editing it according to the feedback given by other members of the group. See [Section 7, Module 1.3](#), headed *Using PowerPoint*, and [Section 4, Module 1.4](#), headed *Whole-class teaching and interactive whiteboards*.

3.4.2 Taking a task-based approach in small groups

As early as the mid-1980s it was realised by imaginative teachers that task-based activities in which the computer was used as a stimulus for discussion in small groups could be more valuable than activities in which an individual learner interacted directly with the computer itself. [Jones G. \(1986\)](#) describes an experiment in which learners played roles as members of a council governing an imaginary kingdom. A single computer in the classroom was used to provide the stimulus for discussion, namely simulating events taking place in the kingdom: crop planting time, harvest time, unforeseen catastrophes, etc. A popular modern computer game that lends itself to this kind of activity is *Sim City*. [Piper \(1986\)](#) reports on conversations that took place among students working jointly on three different tasks: Cloze procedure, sentence reordering and total text reconstruction. See also Mark Warschauer's article: [Warschauer \(1996\)](#).

The teacher might favour a task-based learning approach during the practice and production phases of language learning, when students are beginning to make the new language their own by being given the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of it in preparation for using it productively within a carefully controlled environment. For example, a group of students might be asked to go to a specific website to gather information about a specific topic and to make up a list of lexical items necessary for the next phase of the task, having checked them out either in an online or paper-based dictionary. The next phase involves them in recycling and expanding on the information gleaned from the website to fulfil a different purpose, by using a word-processor. The use of the word-processor encourages experimentation with language because of the freedom to make changes in the text. It enables students to check each other's input and to edit as required. This flexibility is likely to encourage real engagement with the language, which is not always the case when pen and paper are used.

Given the possibilities offered by online communications between two schools, or among a large network of schools, task-based language learning can take comparatively young students out into the countries where the target language is spoken to gather up-to-the-minute information to enable them to complete a task such as the comparison of prices for a given set of items from the supermarket, or a comparative survey of leisure and sports interests in various countries.

3.4.3 Sequencing the use of software

The use of authoring software to provide the bridge between receptive and productive tasks should be considered, as well as establishing a sequence in the use of software, dependent on the phase of learning. For example, if the outcome of a task is the production of an account of an excursion, students can become familiar with the structure of such a text and relevant vocabulary and structures by first of all putting the jumbled lines of an appropriate text into the correct order. They can then work through a gapped version of the text in which the link words are missing. This can be followed by a gapped version in which key concrete nouns are missing. In order to help them to link the spelling of the words with the sounds, an audio recording of the text can be provided. The penultimate activity might be to reconstruct the full text. The final activity would be the production of a similar text using a word-processor, with differing levels of support to match the ability levels present in the class.

3.4.4 Extended task-based learning

For more advanced learners, online multimedia provides an excellent basis for extended task-based work. Given the ready access to online radio and TV broadcasts and newspapers in the target language, students can be asked to monitor the incoming news for a week as portrayed in different media, and provide a factual summary of the most interesting story at the beginning of the following week. They can build up the vocabulary required, adapt the structures used in the source texts and develop their ability to identify the essential facts.

3.4.5 Independent learning

Independent learning at all levels is well supported by ICT since it can provide immediate feedback and, through hypertext links, a wide range of support, both of which are essential to maintain motivation and enable progress. Providing an answer sheet or a checklist at the back

of the book is just not the same. Students repeatedly state that **instant feedback** is one of things that they value most about ICT.

3.5 Hardware considerations

When you begin to consider the integration of the use of ICT into your departmental scheme of work, you will have to take into account the kind of hardware to which you have access and the level of access that you have, and plan accordingly for the immediate future.

However, it is important at this planning stage to consider how you could further raise the levels of achievement of your students if you had access to more powerful hardware. For too long now language teachers have been reticent about their ICT requirements, often only too happy to accept the cast-offs of science and maths colleagues. Language learners have the following core requirements:

- i. Access to a range of communication tools: see [Section 14, Module 1.5](#), headed *Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)*.
- ii. Access to the Web, especially Web 2.0 tools: see [Section 2.1.3, Module 1.5](#), headed *Examples of Web 2.0 applications*.
- iii. Multimedia computers capable of playing audio and video clips: see [Section 2, Module 2.2](#), headed *Essential multimedia hardware and software*.
- iv. Workstations which have headsets so that learners can both record and listen to sound without interfering with their neighbours.
- v. Workstations which have adequate hard disk space on which learners can record their own voices.
- vi. Headsets wired up through a splitter box so that up to three students can share a workstation for collaborative tasks.

3.6 Evaluating software and websites

Unlike evaluating coursebooks, evaluating software and websites takes time. You cannot simply flick through a software package or website as you can a book, partly because it is physically impossible to do so and partly because most people are unable to reach a quick decision about what the software or the website contains and how likely it is to promote successful learning. If you have never formally evaluated a piece of CALL software or a website, you should do so now. Select a CALL software package to which you have ready access, or a website in a foreign language with which you are familiar.

Click here to call up a *Word* document containing two evaluation forms: [Evaluation Forms](#). The document includes:

- **a CALL Software Evaluation Form**
- **a Website / Web Page Evaluation Form**

See also:

- [Section 3.8, Module 1.4](#), headed *Evaluating CALL software*
- [Section 6, Module 1.5](#), headed *Evaluating websites*
- [Section 3.3, Module 2.2](#), headed *Evaluating multimedia software*

3.7 Implementation

As well as evaluating the software, it is important to consider how best it might be **implemented** in order to help students to meet the specified learning outcomes.

3.8 Learning task

Consider the following and reflect on the different kinds of learning that would have taken place in the two ways in which text reconstruction software was used.

In a small secondary school, a departmental decision was taken that text reconstruction software should be used fortnightly with Year 10 students to help them to develop their writing skills in preparation for the public examination at the end of Year 11. Unfortunately, little guidance was provided about how best to use the software.

- i. Teacher 1 sent students home every fortnight with a sample text to learn by heart, which they subsequently reconstructed on a computer in their next French lesson. They had done little previous work on the text although it did contain vocabulary and structures with which they were familiar. In most cases it was a text taken from the student's coursebook.
- ii. Teacher 2, working with a parallel group, often invited students to read the same texts as Teacher 1, but encouraged students to generate alternative forms and content orally during the preceding lesson. The text provided for reconstruction was either a version of the original text, but with one or more changes necessitating a change of form, for example a change of subject pronoun, or a version which contained some changes of content, for example a report of a different kind of holiday than the one read about previously.

In your opinion, which teacher provided the richer learning environment? Which teacher provided the greater challenge? Which teacher provided the easier task? Which task was likely to have stimulated the most cognitive activity? In which class would the students have been most "on task"?

4. Systematically planned integration

Contents of Section 4

- [4.1 A step-by-step guide to successful integration](#)
- [4.2 "It's not so much the program: more what you do with it"](#)

As noted earlier in this module, language teachers have been integrating technological innovations into their practice for a hundred years or more. The integration of ICT is no different in some ways in that many of the same criteria for successful integration apply whatever the media available. However, ICT is different because it has so many different facets, some of which are not necessarily immediately obvious. It is also different because there never was a political imperative to use, for example, video in the classroom, but there is certainly is where ICT is concerned: see [Section 1.1.3](#) (above).

This imperative can be counterproductive in that it can drive teachers to use ICT just for the sake of using ICT. That is really not acceptable. It might be acceptable, perhaps, to start with the ICT resources that you have access to, and then see where they would best fit into your scheme of work. However, the best way of integrating ICT into your practice is to start with the anticipated **learning outcomes** and then use whatever resource is most appropriate to enable your students to achieve these outcomes. In order to make that choice, you need to understand the characteristics of all the media available to you and the content of the resources based on the various media, including resources you already have and those that you would like to acquire to meet a specific need. When you have the necessary understanding and knowledge of the range of media and resources potentially available to you, you may wish to follow the step-by-step guide in [Section 4.1](#) (below). It is rarely necessary to work through a guide every step of the way. There is often iteration. If you have to go back a step and change something after reflection, it will probably improve the learning experience. When you and your students have completed the unit of work, try to spend a little time reviewing what happened and evaluating the outcomes. Good teachers who progress in their professional life reflect on their own practice and make changes when required. Few people get things right first time, every time!

4.1 A step-by-step guide to successful integration

Example unit of work: Understanding and giving directions to locations in a town

Preparation

- i. Identify:
 - o what your students need to know and understand before starting the unit of work,
 - o what they should be able to do on its completion.
- ii. Decide on the ICT tools that you wish to use, e.g. word-processor, *PowerPoint*, authoring tools, Web-based tools:
 - o See [Module 1.3](#) for further information on using word-processors and *PowerPoint*.
 - o See [Module 2.5](#) for further information on authoring tools.
 - o See [Module 1.5](#) and [Module 2.3](#) for further information on Web-based tools.
- iii. Define the learning outcomes in terms which will enable you to assess what has been achieved, e.g.
 - o understanding prepositions of place when used with names of locations;
 - o using prepositions of place correctly with names of locations;
 - o understanding directions, e.g. go straight ahead, turn right, take first left, on the right, on the left, etc;
 - o giving directions orally, as above;
 - o writing a set of directions.
- iv. Identify existing town plans in students' textbooks. Prepare new town plans to be used, e.g. scan in plans of towns, download plans of towns from the Web (e.g. using *Google Maps*), make paper copies of town plans as required, create text handouts with a word-processor, create *PowerPoint* presentations, record computer sound files, create interactive exercises with an authoring tool..
- v. Design and prepare the ICT-based tasks:

- Practice: Students will complete differentiated interactive exercises (with feedback and help) in conjunction with a graphic of a town plan and audio clips relating to the language detailed under (iii) above.
- Production: Students will carry out word-processing activities at three differentiated levels:
 - Group 1 will complete a set of directions, based on a second town plan, by selecting chunks of previously typed in text and copying and pasting them into the correct sequence.
 - Group 2 will complete a text by following a series of prompts or clues such as "first left" etc, in the target language.
 - Group 3 will compose a set of directions.

Implementation: Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP)

- i. Work with the whole class to teach prepositions of place and names of locations, using *PowerPoint* presentations on an interactive whiteboard, in context, using complete sentences.
- ii. Whole-class oral work based on a town plan, using *PowerPoint* presentations on an interactive whiteboard.
- iii. Pair work based on the same town plan, describing locations by relating one building to another, e.g. Student A names first the building and Student B has to identify the location of a second building in relation to it.
- iv. Students complete differentiated ICT-based exercises relating to prepositions of place and names of locations.
- v. Whole-class introduction to phrases describing directions, plus appropriate imperative forms of verbs in context, using complete sentences.
- vi. Whole-class listening activity using sound files on a computer. Task to identify names of destination locations.
- vii. Pair work based on two town plans where three locations are marked on one plan and three different locations are marked on the second plan. On each plan the names of the three locations on the other plan are listed.
 - Student A asks how to get to location 1.
 - Student B gives directions.
 - Student A marks in the location.
 - Student B verifies.
 - If the location is incorrectly placed, the students discuss why - incorrect direction or misunderstanding of direction?
 - Students work through the three locations.
- viii. Homework: Students read up to five sets of directions and mark in the routes of the relevant locations on a town plan.
- ix. Students complete differentiated ICT-based exercises relating to phrases used in giving directions and the imperative forms of verbs.
- x. In order to check pronunciation, the teacher runs a whole-class session where the students provide directions and he/she or other students trace the directions on a town plan shown on an interactive whiteboard.
- xi. Students complete their final differentiated ICT-based tasks, as detailed above, using a word-processor in a computer lab.

Online resources

The above step-by-step guide is only a suggestion, using basic ICT resources. You will find many more ideas on integrating ICT into language teaching in teachers' blogs and websites. Have a look in particular at these two blogs:

- Joe Dale's Blog, Integrating ICT into the MFL classroom: <http://joedale.typepad.com>
- José Picardo's Blog: Box of Tricks: <http://www.boxoftricks.net>

Rather than spending time creating your own *PowerPoint* presentations and printed handouts, you may consider looking for existing materials at resources sites, which contain materials donated by practising teachers, e.g.

- **Modern Foreign Languages Resources:** A large set of free downloadable resources for teachers of Modern Foreign Languages. Mainly geared to secondary education: <http://www.mflresources.org.uk>
- **MFL Sunderland:** Lots of useful downloadable resources and information here and links to other useful sites. Created and maintained by a group of teachers of Modern Foreign Languages in Sunderland schools: <http://www.sunderlandschools.org/mfl%2Dsunderland/index.htm>

Many more sites are listed on Graham Davies's [Favourite Websites](#) page.

4.2 "It's not so much the program: more what you do with it"

Remember that the buck really does stop with the teacher. No resource, however good, will deliver successful learning outcomes if it is used inappropriately. It is not what ICT can *do*, but what the teacher can *do with* ICT. Integration of technology into language teaching is by no means a new issue. As long ago as 1986 Chris Jones pointed out: "It's not so much the program: more what you do with it" ([Jones C. 1986](#)). This theme was picked up again by [Davies \(1997:39\)](#), citing Chris Jones in a reference to the demise of the language lab:

One of the reasons for the decline of the language lab [...] was the lack of ideas. During the 1980s, however, the language lab was given a new lease of life. This was partly due to improved reliability, more user-friendly controls, more imaginative materials and improved lab design that got away from the battery-chicken-farm appearance of rows of booths. At the same time, self-access was coming into fashion and there was a wealth of new ideas on using the lab: pair work, group work, role-play, communication games, etc. ([Ely 1984](#))

The problem lies not so much in the lack of imaginative programs, more in teachers' attitudes to computers. Chris Jones summarised the problem as follows:

Language-learning computer programs, to a much greater extent than language-learning materials on paper, are expected to stand or fall on their own merits, without consideration of their role in a classroom lesson. ([Jones C. 1986:171](#))

Whereas the teacher and the textbook, or the teacher and the cassette recorder, are regarded as classroom allies, the computer and teacher have generally been seen more as rivals. ([Jones C. 1986:171](#))

Such attitudes are probably due to the fact that teachers perceive the computer as *controlling* events in the language classroom or in the self-access room. But no computer software stands

or falls on its own merits, no more than any coursebook or audio or video materials. All too often I have observed teachers dismissing a program as "rubbish", without giving the slightest consideration as to where it might fit into their classroom activities or as part of a guided self-access scheme. Most teachers can probably benefit from Chris Jones's advice, which is just as valid today as it was in 1986:

- Try it and see what happens. Don't pre-judge.
- Don't expect the program to do all the work.
- If things don't work out, don't automatically blame the program. The problem may lie elsewhere.
- Above all, use your imagination. ([Jones C. 1986:178](#))

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Hot Potatoes: This software was especially developed to create Web-based language exercises, including multiple choice, gap-filling, matching, jumbled sentences, crosswords and short text entry. It is used extensively on websites that provide interactive exercises and tests. Visit the *Hot Potatoes* website to find out more, download the software and see lots of examples: <http://hotpot.uvic.ca>. See [Winke & MacGregor \(2001\)](#) for a review of *Hot Potatoes*.

IALLT: The US-based International Association for Language Learning Technology, originally known as IALL (International Association for Learning Labs). IALLT is a professional organisation dedicated to promoting effective uses of media centres for language teaching, learning, and research: <http://www.iallt.org>

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<http://www.quia.com>

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<http://www.worldcall.org>. The First World Conference on CALL was held at the University of Melbourne, Australia, in 1998, and the Second World Conference on CALL took place in Banff, Canada, in 2003. The Third WorldCALL Conference took place in Japan in 2008.

Feedback and blog

If you wish to send us feedback on any aspect of the ICT4LT website, use our online [Feedback Form](#) or visit the **ICT4LT blog** at: <http://ictforlanguageteachers.blogspot.com>

Document last updated 15 September 2010. This page is maintained by Graham Davies.

Please cite this Web page as:

Hewer S. & Davies G. (2010) Integrating ICT into language teaching. Module 2.1 in Davies G. (ed.) *Information and Communications Technology for Language Teachers (ICT4LT)*, Slough, Thames Valley University [Online]. Available from: http://www.ict4lt.org/en/en_mod2-1.htm [Accessed DD Month YYYY].

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